A Fascinating Detective Story

(Continued from Preceding Page)

he exclaimed in a voice of pain that rent my heart. "It will be all to go through again! All, and worse!"

I had guessed before what all this suppression and strain must se costing uncle, but these were the first words in which be had ever voiced them to me. I could do nothing to help him. I found no phrases of comfort, All I did was to put out my hand and stroke his poor head as it lay there so

miserably.

I really believe that he did find a species of solace in that dumb animal caress, for presently be lifted his face again and looked at me. Then he took my hand in his and stroked it. "Bless you, dear," he said. "I did not mean to be a coward. I must go through with itwe must-you and I together. Don't believe, dear, that I do not realize all you are doing for me, all you are suffering for me.

Then he went away, awkwardly and man-like. His voice had begun to be choky. I was fearfully sorry for him. And I am sure be did not know how those few poor choky words had helped and heartened me. It was one thing to go on bearing the gloom and grief of it all by oneseff; it was another, and a lighter thing, to bear it with the knowledge that there was one beside you knowing what you were enduring and grateful to you for your share in it as well as bearing his own far heavier burden.

Therewith there began a new and rather a less grievous phase in our lives, because we were better able to express to each other our sympathy even if it were only in such unspoken ways as a prev-sure of the hand or a look of mutual understanding. And now and again uncle could even bring himself to speak of what he was en during and had still to go through

He did not hide from himse that this trial of Captain Vibert must of necessity lead to a far wider publicity of a great deal of that trouble in his domestic life which had already been in some part disclosed at the inquest. All this we might have hoped to avoid had suspicion not been turned on Cantain Vibert by the pure accident of the Manson girl seeing him in the shrubbery path.

Of course, I knew that I ought to be thankful that justice was in precess of being done and my young aunt's cruel murder avenged I believe I should have been truly grateful if all recollecit could have been allowed e from the mind of the imout out public, even at the cost thing the murderer go at large. in after Sergeant Crisp's an

ment to me of the arrest. followed what appeared a inexplicable and unnecesly long interval in which nothit seemed, was done. Premably something was being done al the while, letters passing, forms being signed, innumerable knots in red tape tied and untied. - At length we were told that the arrested man had been delivered up by the French police authorities and had been brought to England, and again a long tapse of all apparent activity ensued, during which, as Sergeant Crisp, whom I

saw twice again, put it, "the case

was being prepared.' Considering the few witnesses that could be needed and the obvious character of the whole evidence it was a preparation which seemed to the lay mind of inordinate length, but the lay mind always has been, and I suppose always will be, incapable of understanding the long-drawn-out agonies of the law. In the meantime Captain Vibart had been charged before the magistrates and duly committed, and the case, we were told, was finally down for trial at

the forthcoming Summer assizes. Uncle Ralph had withdrawn himself from all public life since the death of Aunt Enid, but, of course, everybody in the neighborhood knew him and was most truly sorry for him. There was not, I suppose, in the whole county 1 man more popular. I am sure that all the officials connected with the court in our little country town. where the trial was held, did their very best to mitigate its horror and to make things as little uncomfortable for us as possible, but, for all that, it was very dreadful. The sordidness and unattractiveness of all the surroundings of a court house, its dreary dirty and ill-lighted passages, its nard, comfortless seats, all are small items adding to the misery of the whole. There seems to be a mechanical inhumanity about it all which is very dreadful.

In large part the evidence brought forward at the trial was only a recapitulation of that which had been given at the inquest. There was the keeper's evidence of the finding of the body, the summoning of uncle, the pursuit of Heasden through the bushes, and the rest of it with which we were very familiar. It was when Celeste

was brought into the bex that I knew the test was at hand. I looked at uncle. His broad and once so good-humored face was set very firmly. He, too, was bracing bimself for what was coming.

I had not seen Celeste for several months. When she left us I had said that I would give her a character if she was looking for another place. I had no option, much as I disliked her, for there was nothing tangible against her. But I had not heard from her and did not know at all what she had been doing in the mountime.

She had not been long in the box before it became very evident what one of the things was that she had been doing. She had talked. But the counsel had been well conched by his solicitor—I believe that is the process in the questions that he should ask in order to bring out their strongest and less far able light the various meetings in London and elsewhere of Aunt Enid and her lover.

It was not until she began to speak of these that the prisoner turned in the dock so as to give me a full view of his face. Hitherto he had faced away from me. I heard him reply "Not Guilty" to the usual challenge, but I had prac-

tically not seen him. His mustaches, which were his most obvious peculiarity, had been closely shaved, as I was told, and his whole appearance greatly al-tered when he was arrested, but he had let them grow again in priso and I could not see that he looks at all different from the man whom had so cordially disliked at Scot ney, except that his face, which was then bronzed from the Indian sun and life in the open air, was now very pale—the result, I imagine, of being within doors. He was plainly very nervous and scarcely ceased to clasp and unclasp his hands on the front of the deck, but that, after all, was not

with my young aunt appeared to interest him more than any of the evidence which had preceded it. Perhaps he was wondering how much she knew, or perhaps-this idea also flashed across me as I watched him-he was wondering at her power of invention. How much of what she said might be true I had no means of knowing, but if only a half of it were veraclous the meetings must have been far more frequent than I, at least, ever had suspected.

Counsel on both sides really did seem to understand that this exposure to the vulgar view of his domestic troubles must be a very ghastly indignity and grief for Uncle Ralph to suffer, for when he was called as witness neither in examination por cross-examination was he harassed further than was necessary to elicit the essential facts. He had, of course, to make public a great deal more than be had revealed at the in-

Celeste's evidence had already agreements between husband and wife on account of Captain Vibart, and uncle candidly told the jury that he had in the first instance 33.38 ordered Captain Vibart out of the house on the Thuisday evening. but had agreed subsequently that he should remain until the following morning in order not to give the servants occasion to suspect a scandal. I was terribly sorry for uncle when the counsel for the crown began to ask him about his interview with Aunt Enid on the subject, but it was a brief torture. for uncle said at once that he had extracted a promise from her that she would never see or communicate in any way with the captain again.

In spite of which promise she had, on the very next morning, if Celeste's evidence were to be believed, received, by Celeste's own hand, a note from the captain.

When the prisoner was first arrested in Paris he had protested his utter innocence of the crime and had denied that he had ever left London on the night when it was committed. Evidence was put m to show that this was the line that he had taken on his arrest. But almost as soon as ever he came into the box and began to answer the questions which his counsel put to him it was plain that he had abandoned this line altogether. Presumably he had been better advised in the interval. seeing how strong the facts were

against him. It was for this reason, because he was prepared to make full admission of the fact that he had visited Scotney that evening, that Matilda Manson was not more severely cross-questioned than she had been. Nor was all the evidence in regard to the motor car in which his visit had been made at all disputed. He even admitted, on being questioned, that the note handed by Celeste to heremistress was in his writing, and that its purport was to propose a meeting in 5 Summer-house at nine o'clock

on that very Friday night. Admitting so much, it was

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searcely much use to him to attempt to deev anything that Celeste bad say, no matter to what depth her rivid fancy might have embroiders; the actual truth of it. He declared faat the single motive of his coming down had been to see once age n the woman whom he admitted that he loved, and to say farewell to her, as he had not been able to say it before.

That, so far, was his story. He had motored down from London, hiring the car according to the evidence given, turning it, just as the prosecution had supposed, at that point under the Scotney House trees where their shadow is deep-

"And what time would that be, that you left the car and went through the gate into the shrub-

"Twenty minutes to nine." "You took note of the time?" "I looked at my watch just before I turned out the lights of the

"Yes-and then?" "I went along the path to the

"You saw no one?" "And what did you do?"

"I sat in the Summer-house and

With impatience?" "I was not particularly impatient at first. I suppose when nine o'clock came I began to be im-

patient." You looked at your watch again?" "Several times." "By the moonlight?"

"So far as I remember, it was by the light of matches—I smoked a 'And did you sit still all the

"No; I walked up once or twice to the function of the path to the Summer-house with the main path and looked down the path."

'How many times did you do "I daresay three times-I am not

quite certain." "Would that be before nine o'clock or after?" The first time, I think, was just

about nine, and the others after-"And the last of those was-at what hour?"

"Just before half-past nine." "And at half-past nine what did

"I came out from the Summerhouse for the last time. I stood a minute or so, perhaps, looking down the path toward the house,

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By Horace Hutchinson

'Yes, a good rug." "Perhaps two?"

or twice a man or boy whistling.

"So then you went back to Lon-

"Yes-if you like to put it so."

"Certainly not. What would have been the good?"

"You did not attempt to go down

The counsel did not reply. After

all, he was not there to be the

questioned one. But he did say, in a tone that implied much sym-

pathy: "It must have been very cold waiting."

"Ah, you had a good rug?"

they all use Delatone

had heard none distinctly.

don, disappointed?"

to the house?"

cold driving?"

"Not so very."

Fashion says

the use of

the path the other way again and

got into the car and went back to

"And during all that time you

"Not a soul all the time since

His counsel intimated that this

was the end of the questions that

he wished to put to his client, but,

of course, all supposed that his real trial was only just about to

begin in the cross-questions which

the prosecution for the crown was

likely to put to him.

The K. C. began by asking him

why he had gone down alone in the car, why he had not taken a

driver with him? Captain Vibart

replied that he really preferred driving himself, and, further, even

had that not been so, that he pre-ferred being alone on this particu-

lar errand, so as not to compromise Lady Carlton by letting anyone know that he had been to Scotney.

The counsel appeared to accept this as satisfactory, and then turned to ask him shout his period of waiting. Had he seen nobody at

all? How was it, if he was there

all alone and as long as he said, that he did not see Matilda Men-son, for one, coming along the

main path?

His reply was that part at least, probably a half, of the main shrubbery path, where the Summerhouse faced it, was in deep shadow

and that it was extremely probable that anyone might pass along, past

the little side path's entrance, and not be seen from the Summer-

And he had not heard a sound?

He remerked that he had heard

dog barking in the distance, once

you left the car to the time when you were in it and driving again?"

saw no one?"

"Not a soul."

"That is so."

and several times repeated an owlhooting. Except those sounds he The question, was the first that

seemed to embarrass him at all. "Yes-I don't know," he said. "Perhaps there may have been two. I was quite warm." "And these rugs-they were in

the car or did you bring them to the garage from your rooms?" "Neither. I drove the car round to my rooms before I left London and picked up the rugs there.'

There was much further crisscross of question and answer, but no new fact was elicited, andeat length he was allowed to quit the witness box and resume his old





place in the dock.

To Be Continued Next Sunday

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